

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP, INC.

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Panel

**Redeveloping Sustainable Communities: The Nexus of Race, Class & Credit
June 2, 2008**

**2009 National Vacant Properties Campaign Conference
Building Leadership to Restore Communities
Louisville, Kentucky**

The Right Framework For Sustainable & Equitable Redevelopment of Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

The Community Revitalization Alliance (CRA) is a growing national coalition of community sector organizations whose collective work focuses on sustainable community development and federal public policy. The Alliance coalesces leaders and stakeholders in the fields of community development, economic development, finance, the environment, labor, civil rights and public health. Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. host and manages the Alliance. In the context of sustainable community development, this 90-minute panel will explore the credit crisis, historical race and class underpinnings of credit disparities, and pose strategic solutions that address needed federal policy decisions and reforms.

Credit market reform is a priority on the CRA national policy agenda. The unfolding credit crisis threatens to impede sustainable redevelopment in distressed low income communities many of which are also communities of color. The credit crisis exacerbates tight credit which already stymies redevelopment of vacant and contaminated properties in these neighborhoods. Property values that are low due to the proximity of blight and environmental hazards are plummeting further and many of these communities face even greater difficulties securing development investments.

Credit is more than a means of providing housing in our communities. Credit provides jobs, establishes and expands businesses, stimulates entrepreneurship, and creates opportunities to build on community assets in ways that improve neighborhoods. Tight credit is endemic in many communities of color and low income communities. The national credit crisis which threatens the US and global economies heightens racial disparities and inequality. Communities already hard hit by vacant properties and environmental contamination also experienced the greatest rates of subprime lending in recent years. Meanwhile housing affordability, its relationship to wealth and the downturn in home values remains a leading concern.

The panelists, renowned thought leaders in their fields will unpack relevant credit myths and share perspectives on addressing the credit crisis in ways that will catalyze redevelopment in all communities including undercapitalized ones. Panelists will discuss lending and underwriting, innovative strategies, public policy approaches and recommendations on the role of the incoming Presidential Administration.

Objectives

1. Build and rebuild smart, livable, healthy communities through sustainable re-use of under-utilized brownfields and vacant properties into equitable -- smart -- livable -- healthy -- communities. Equitable development coupled with integrated approaches to the environment and health is the optimal social, economic and environmental framework that will get us there.

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2. Redress places around this nation where decades of land uses, zoning, and long term public and private sector disinvestments gave rise to vacant properties and distressed neighborhoods. These same disinvestments, which simultaneously financed sprawl, aggravated economic and social disparities already evident in these rural, urban and tribal neighborhoods. The complexities of brownfields and vacant properties are nearly synonymous with neighborhoods in low income people communities and communities of people of color in affected cities, inner ring suburbs and rural towns.

Equitable Development

- Recognizes that market forces alone will not ameliorate economic, health, environmental and social challenges or infrastructure deficits in low income communities and communities of color.
- Addresses economic and social forces and demographics, among them: concentrated poverty – inadequate housing – substandard education – crime – chronic unemployment -- poor health and health care – pollution – food insecurity– predatory lending and insurance redlining. Education or lack thereof, for example, affects health and economic attainment.
- Factors in the ways in which land use and redevelopment either reinforce negative social and economic trends or reverse them. Equitable development is the smart way forward connecting the dots between community revitalization, community interests and needs, planning and decision making.
- Seeks the objectives of growth and development that results in shared prosperity and wealth-building opportunities. There is ample evidence of the nexus between concentrated poverty, social, environmental and health disparities, costs borne by low income communities, and costs borne by everyone or society-at-large.

Community Engagement

- Values people who live and work in the community, those who lived through the decades of disinvestments -- the front line of redevelopment stakeholders. Includes and factors in the interests and views and needs of people in redeveloping neighborhoods.
- Centers, involves and engages the community in the redevelopment planning and decision framework.
- Deploys the capacity of the entire community in multi-stakeholder decision making, demonstrating that community leadership, engaging and involving people in the community results in better, smarter development.
- Recognizes that generally in U.S. society, in setting public policy, the benefits accrue to those with the most resources and the burdens fall on those with fewer resources. Lower incomes translate into fewer choices and opportunities.

New Collaborative Public Policy Tools and Approaches: Announcing the Capitol Hill Summit on Sustainable Communities, Environmental Justice and the New Economy Coming in Fall 2009

Background

The national Community Revitalization Alliance is a growing coalition of community development, sustainable development and environmental justice stakeholders working at the federal level on equitable development, community revitalization, environmental quality and public health policies. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Alliance connects a growing number of community development corporations (CDCs), environmental justice groups, civic associations, faith based organizations, community based businesses, developers, academics, researchers, practitioners and thought leaders in these fields from around the nation.

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To-date, the Community Revitalization Alliance represents 50 organizations and institutions spanning 20 states. The Alliance is hosted and managed by Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. The groups and the institutions that comprise the Community Revitalization Alliance are leaders in problem-solving and implementing innovative rural and urban strategies and projects. Their work epitomizes place-based best practices.

We are planning the Capitol Hill Summit on Sustainable Communities, Environmental Justice and the New Economy, which will convene these organizations and others in September 2009 seizing this moment to impact the new economy. In collaboration, the Alliance seeks to ensure that federal investments, including the federal budget and economic recovery efforts, advance sustainability by definition incorporating equity, addressing and meeting community needs.

The Capitol Hill Summit is a venue wherein the community sector frames and leads a public policy conversation among multi-stakeholders from the perspective of sustainable communities. The community sector of our concern is comprised of people – families, children and workers who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods with unhealthy air and housing, vacant and contaminated properties, unsafe parks, unreliable public transportation, limited grocery stores and healthy food options, and health disparities. Community stakeholders are concerned about rapid delivery of environmental and economic benefits to people whose needs are most chronic in areas hardest hit by the recession. Additionally, communities desire mandates to strongly engage people and grassroots workers in setting the governmental investment agenda and spending decisions.

In terms of recovery expenditures and other important appropriations such as the FY 2010 budget, ongoing and new environmental and energy programs, the Community Revitalization Alliance's Capitol Hill Summit will gather key constituencies to address resolving economic, social and health disparities through sustainable infrastructure investments, jobs, wealth creation and commitment of other relevant resources.

Summit Overview

Borrowing from the lexicon of the stimulus package, it's difficult to have projects that are "shovel-ready" when you're in a community that doesn't have a shovel. Distressed neighborhoods must be prioritized. Decisions about federal dollars should reflect the importance of revitalizing disadvantaged places and creating wealth as well the connectivity between sustainable community and economic development, the environment and health.

Equitable development, environmental quality, energy efficiency, public health, climate change, natural resources conservation, transportation, growing the green economy, minority entrepreneurship, job creation, wealth-building and green collar jobs are interlinked in the new economy. Together with directing resources to state and local government coffers, policy decision makers should ensure that funding is dedicated to the community sector and that local organizations are engaged and instrumental to decisions about investments and spending.

The Capitol Hill Summit on Sustainable Communities, Environmental Justice and the New Economy is a venue wherein the community sector frames and leads a public policy conversation among stakeholders from the perspective of sustainable communities. Problem-solving regarding issues under this umbrella demand community engagement and require the involvement of a range of public and private sector stakeholders whose decisions affect local places and quality of life.

Our intention is to help policy decision makers create the language, tools and approaches which flow from the connections between sustainability, growth and development and economic prosperity factoring in the relationship of redevelopment to revitalization, redressing climate impacts, environmental restoration and health.

The Capitol Hill Summit will explore and highlight ways that ongoing federal efforts and the federal budget can help to ready underserved populations and neighborhoods for economic prosperity. The event will foster collaboration with Congress, the Executive Branch, governmental agencies and others at the national level as well as influential public and private sector stakeholder groups in ways that:

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- define sustainability and effective approaches to achieve it in the new economy;
- deploy the power and advance the views of local people;
- deliver resources to people, businesses and workers in distressed neighborhoods;
- help rebuild underserved places into sustainable communities;
- ensure environmental quality for everyone;
- afford opportunities for health and well-being; and
- result in shared prosperity.

Our objectives involve changing the reality of communications and structural barriers at the federal level which impede community preparedness to capitalize on the new green economy and stymie delivery of resources to the underserved, under-employed and chronically unemployed. The Summit is focused on ensuring that public policies and investments prioritize inclusion of communities of color and low income communities in the benefits of the new economy.

Summit objectives:

1. connecting underserved communities to policy decision makers, key stakeholders and leaders;
2. showcasing community best practices in sustainability and leveraging the green economy;
3. influencing the national discourse, decisions and investments in ways that position underserved communities to benefit from environmental and health, economic and social advances of the new economy;
4. advancing a definition of sustainability defined as incorporating equity and shared prosperity;
5. promoting a sustainable communities framework which integrates a range of elements including urban and rural community and economic development
 - a. environmental quality, public health
 - b. redressing climate, energy efficiency
 - c. smart growth and access to transportation
 - d. green, affordable housing, healthy schools
 - e. workforce development, green jobs and
 - f. minority entrepreneurship

A multi-stakeholder National Planning Committee informs our conference design. The first planning meeting and invitational luncheon convened in Washington, DC Monday, May 11, 2009.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US:

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